



**Flint Hills Regional Council Board of Directors
Minutes of March 18, 2011**

**Flint Hills Regional Council Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes – March 18, 2011
Meeting Location – Morris County Courthouse, Council Grove, KS**

Present from Board of the Regional Council: **John Armburst**, Governor's Military Council; **Ben Bennett**, Geary County Commissioner; **Vic Enns**, Wamego City Commissioner; **Stan Hartwich**, Pottawatomie County Commissioner; **Vern Hay**, Morris County Commissioner; **Terry Heldstab**, Junction City Commissioner; **Galen Johnson**, Dwight Mayor; **Karen McCulloh**, Riley County Commissioner; **Joe Kormanik**, Alta Vista Council; **MarySue Roller**, Woodbine City Council; **Debi Schwerdtfeger**, Council Grove City Council; **David Shover**, Riley City Council; and **Ervan Stuewe**, Wabaunsee County Commissioner.

Absent from the Board: **Sharon Brown**, Clay Center Mayor; **Dan Deiter**, Alma City Council; **Jackie Hartman**, Kansas State University; **Linda Hoeffner**, Fort Riley; **Robby McGowan**, Onaga City Council; and **Jim Sherow**, Manhattan Commissioner.

Present from the Greater Regional Council Membership: No additional members present.

Present from Staff Support: **Ty Warner**, Executive Director and **Unique Hiram**, Administrative Manager.

Guests: **Dr. Carol Blocksome**, Kansas State University (Agronomy); **Karen Davis**, City of Manhattan; **Cynthia Engle**, Council Grove Mayor; **Michelle Garrett**, Morris County Clerk; **Joyce Hutter**, Council Grove Chamber; **Danny Matthews**, Council Grove Administrator; **Bruce McMillian**, Flint Hills Regional Task Force; **Todd Moore**, Junction City Chamber; **Dr. Kevin Price**, Kansas State University (Agronomy); **Angie Schwerdtfeger**, TCT Communications; **Monty Wedel**, Riley County; and **David Yearout**, Junction City/Geary County.

Call to Order:

Vice President Heldstab called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. and FHRC Executive Director Ty Warner asked for all board members, staff and guests to briefly introduce themselves as well as provide signatures on the sign-in sheets.

Approval of Minutes:

Member Vic Enns moved to approve the minutes from February 18, 2011 as presented. Member Vern Hay seconded. Motion was carried unanimously.

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Welcome/Community Overview:

Host Member Vern Hay welcomed the board, staff and guests to the community. He gave an overview on the history of Morris County and the Santa Fe Trail. Additionally, there were two areas of concerns expressed in regards to current proposed state government regulations: mental health funding and gas tax revenue loss.

Redcedar Encroachment and Flint Hills Community Impact:

Guest speaker Dr. Kevin Price, KSU Agronomy Department gave a presentation on the impact that red cedar growth is having on Kansas. Highlights from the presentation are as follows:

- Eastern Red Cedar (*juniperus virginia*) is native to Kansas and is utilized for soil erosion.
- In Oklahoma, red cedar trees have caused a \$308 million loss in livestock revenue and have been taking over 762 acres per day.
- Invasion of these trees will cause a loss of native prairie land used for farming; currently livestock generates \$6.9 billion annual revenue and crops generate \$3.5 billion which will be adversely affected if this issue is not addressed (*the figures were obtained from USDA*).
- Dr. Price and a few other KSU professors/scientists are trying to obtain a USDA grant to harvest these red cedar trees. The wood can be used as a biofuel resulting in monetary savings for the communities and state.
- There is an invasion of these trees in the grasslands of Salina, KS, which was showcased utilizing satellite imagery. Additionally, in Douglas and Riley counties there are 12,079 acres of red cedar trees currently accounted for.
- Grazing lands and water supplies will adversely be affected if proactive measures are not taken to stunt the growth of these trees and educate the public about the highly potential problems related to this growth, including their potential for fire and flammability and the creation of a desert-like environment for wildlife.
- Advantages for modeling above ground would not be limited to but include the following: improved range management, potential for development of rangeland insurance program, better management of spring burning timing and improvement to the ecosystem.
- Dr. Carol Blocksome, KSU Agronomy, informed the meeting attendees about Fire Wise Communities trainings that are currently being offered.
- Ben Bennett, Geary County, spoke about the classes that are being given in his area of the region and how they unfortunately have been poorly attended. Also, he talked about how Geary County EMS is heavily involved in trying to inform the public of the importance of these classes.
- Karen McCulloh, Riley County, suggested developing a planning footprint for the red cedar issue and deciding how the council could be proactive in assisting with educating the public about this issue.
- Ty Warner, FHRC Executive Director, informed the Council that there are aspects in the Regional Growth Plan that address conservation development that could apply to the planning components of this issue.

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OEA Grant Update:

Warner relayed that the new OEA grant application had passed the OEA's Technical Review Committee with not further cuts than had been made prior to submission. It is awaiting final preparation and signature at OEA, but will be retroactive to March 1, 2011. He further expressed the Council's appreciation to the City of Manhattan for administrating the grant during the formation of the FHRC, and thanked the city for a smooth and helpful transition as accounting and other aspects of the grant are now vested fully in the Regional Council.

Recap of 1st Infantry Division Retreat:

Warner and several Board members were recently invited to accompany the 1st Infantry Division to Cantigny Park in Wheaton, Illinois for a two-day retreat. Day #1 focused on the History of the Big Red One, and Day #2 focused on Workshop discussions about past deployment and lessons learned for the communities. Ty Warner, Ben Bennett, Vern Hay and John Armbrust gave brief reflections having participated in this event.

- Warner relayed that there is a deep concern of the integration process for soldiers coming back from deployment, and Fort Riley is piloting the "2-2-3-2" process, which includes 2 weeks of reintegration, 2 weeks of leave, 3 weeks back to work, and then another 2 weeks of final leave. Main stressors on families are appearing during the 3-week period, and the Division is trying to be proactive in addressing the reintegration impacts on spouses and the need for true vacation downtime.
- Bennett relayed the important historical aspects of the 1st Division Museum at Cantigny in Wheaton, IL and the legacy of Colonel Robert R. McCormick.
- Hay indicated that a big issue that the remaining spouses deal with is separation anxiety. It becomes evidently present due to the return of their soldier from deployment and the fact that new routines will have to be established because they were changed during deployment. One suggestion given was that communication with other sister services are utilized because it is a common situation throughout all military branches.
- Armbrust summarized the issues that occur pre/post and during deployment, concerns on the installation, and disconnection with communities. Also happening during the retreat were the recording of oral histories that were given by both the top five command figures as well as their spouses. Warner added that artifacts from Basra were also presented to the 1st Infantry Museum collection during this visit.

Hiring Update:

Warner briefed the Council on the status of the hiring for the Regional Planner, which was posted nationally. There were nearly 40 resumes submitted and Warner is currently in the process of setting up phone interviews for top candidates. As the requirements for this position were clearly defined, the ad attracted good quality

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applicants and the challenge is narrowing down those with the best fit for the Regional Council among many good candidates.

Membership Update:

- Grandview Plaza is considering becoming a member of the Flint Hills Regional Council. Warner spoke at Grandview Plaza's City Council meeting at their meeting last Tuesday, March 15, 2011.
- Dwight/Alta Vista – Warner will be speaking at a joint meeting of Dwight and Alta Vista on Monday, March 21, 2011.
- Riley/Randolph/Leonardville – Warner will be speaking at the Riley City Council meeting next week, to which, as David Shover confirmed, Randolph and Leonardville were invited to attend as well.
- There have been conversations with several commissioners from Abilene regarding membership, including during the 1st Infantry Division retreat. Abilene has requested additional information.

Website:

Ty Warner showcased the work that has been completed thus far by New Boston Creative Group. The mechanics of website functionality are currently under construction, and content is being developed for integration once the site's functionality is ready. The site will serve not only as an information and collaboration source for the work of the Regional Council, but www.FlintHillsRegion.org will also serve as a portal to member communities and other regional entities.

Other Business:

- Warner reported that under the auspices of the Regional Housing Task Force, staff from Riley County, Manhattan, and Junction City/Geary County gathered and compiled rental unit vacancy data from the Census' American Community Survey by ascertaining the number of total housing units in each county and applying ACS rental percentages against ASC vacancy data. Monty Wedel from Riley County confirmed that these calculations were crosschecked against Riley County appraiser data to "ground truth" these estimates, and they appear to be within an acceptable range of accuracy. This information will be relayed to Linda Hoeffner at Fort Riley. The Regional Housing Task Force will reconvene to help determine if any additional fine-tuning of the data needs to take place.
- Ben Bennett addressed concerns over board reorganization before the new seating of board members in July 2011, due to the loss and possible loss of current board members before that time frame. There was a recommendation that the Executive Board reconvene to discuss the transition.
- Vern Hay expressed the desire to get the board members' input on how the mental health funding cuts and possible "siphoning" of gas tax revenue might be addressed by the Council. Karen McCulloh suggested that individual letters be written to the current legislators and that the Council

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consider discussing what legislative platforms the council should address starting in the late summer.

- Ervan Stuewe expressed concern over the fact that there are some Board members who are struggling to attend the monthly meetings, due to work conflicts during the day. At the same time, there is an appreciation that more evening meetings are not necessarily desired. Heldstab indicated the Council would take that under advisement going forward.

April Meeting:

Warner raised the prospect of moving the April meeting date due to some scheduling difficulties. The Board agreed to adjust April's meeting date to April 8, 2011. The meeting will be held at the George Smith Reception Hall, 103 W. 7th Street, Junction City, KS at the regular time of 9:00 a.m. Warner noted that this facility is not handicapped accessible.

Meeting Adjourned:

The board meeting was officially adjourned at 11:38 a.m.